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857 of *letaṭe* (*Mariscus sp.*) or *lejekajeke* (*Cyperus immensus*), rush-grasses which the ants seize with their antennae. The girls who have been stamping now set out with some friends from a neighbouring village, all armed [561] with axes, to collect firewood. The girls of this company are age-mates; [832] they share their labours, confide their love affairs, bathe together, and, in the late afternoon, when they go to the bush, they sit together elongating their *labia minora* (*hu kwɛva*). Meanwhile the village lies basking and dreaming in the afternoon sun; except for the pecking fowls there is hardly a stir. '*Vu gae*' ('Where is it—beer'), says Raselaka to his son Sekware, as he returns with some poles on his shoulder for repairing his 574 wife's granary. 'There is beer of *lejema* [work-party] over at Mudziri's,' 273 is the reply; and the men, accompanied by the visitors, set out for the beer drink, knowing they will be allowed to partake even though they have done no work.

The hum of voices as you near a certain kraal leaves you in no doubt that this must be Mudziri's village. A fair crowd has gathered in the courtyard of the woman who is holding the *lejema* and a typical beer-drinking scene meets the eye. The centre of the picture is a large pot of beer placed in a rounded depression made for it in the courtyard. Beside it stands a flat winnowing basket containing long-handled calabash cups from which the beer is drunk. Beside the pot sits a man who serves the beer, using a beer-cup as ladle; he gives each cup to a young man of about twenty, who hands it round. The guests have ranged themselves on either side of the beer pot, women on one side, men on the other. As each calabash is emptied, it is brought back by the young man who is doing the waiting, to be filled. There is no hurry. Each one drinks at his leisure and conversation flows freely. Every one knows he will be given in his turn and, if one man is handed a second cup, he will pass it on to any one who has not yet been served, till all have had four or five. It is a pleasant social gathering and all the latest gossip is discussed. Small children toddle about in between the drinkers and may even be given a ●651 little of the beer. Ominously Pheduli remarks, 'Madume has seen police 625 near Medingen. There appear to be four of them. What can they be wanting?' 'Oh,' replies Dwagu, 'they are no doubt raiding for tax defaulters!' There is general uneasiness, for about a fifth of the gathering are in arrears. Muhale is six years in arrears and, as he never goes to town to work, he has not once been caught. 'They won't catch me napping in my home to-night,' volunteers Mathɛkha. 'I shall go into the bush again. Are they Shangana-Ṭonga or Sotho, those police Madume saw?' a very relevant question, because the Shangana-Ṭonga, more likely than not recruited from outside the reserve, will not know these hiding places in the forests and caves. Here Pɛkɛla describes how his friend Setimɛla, who had himself always been in default and knew all the best hiding places, had joined the police the previous year. Consequently, at the very next raid the police made a most successful scoop, catching ninety-six defaulters, whom they marched to Duivelskloof.

574 The beer-pot is almost empty and people are merely sitting talking 273 when the host calls Raselaka and his European guest aside into his reception hut, together with a few other intimates. A woman brings in a small

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and dirt for the vital ingredient of the rain medicine, and after a while close relatives secretly dig a grave at Maulwi, the place where to-day the sacred drums are also kept. The grave is deep, for the queen must stand upright, 'taking care' of her country, and facing to the north, whence her ancestors came. The body is wrapped in a greenish-black cloth, a portion still of what was brought from the north, and over it is wound the skin of an ox. The hearse proceeds from the village secretly at night, and, as the great must rest, the bearers stop every few yards. Sacred beads, a calabash of water, a firebrand, the grains upon which people live and (in the old days) the body of a man, the 'mat' of the chief, are interred with the queen. The calabash and firebrand, used also to expel a usurper, provide the essentials for the 'journey' to be undertaken. A slab of stone covers the mouth of the grave and facilitates the re-opening whenever rain medicine (*mufugo*) is to be poured into it. The grave is not all at once filled up with soil; it is guarded against enemies, who might destroy the country with the medicine the body provides; and it is said that a wooden structure, on which the watchers sleep, is built over the grave. The soil at last reaches the neck, but the head must be left uncovered for perhaps six months, until it has completely decomposed.

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A year later the district heads are assembled at the capital, the death is announced and the drum beaten, and people shave their heads. It is said that foreigners entered the country at the peril of life and belongings. When the hair has grown and the mourning period ends, all fires in the country are put out. This same fire-rite figures, as far as a district is concerned, at the installation of its head, and as far as the whole country is concerned, when all-pervasive impediments to rain are removed. It essentially consists—we have described it briefly in Chapter XV—of putting out fires with medicine (*mufugo*) by boys who receive the medicine at the capital, and of a chain of payments, by the women to the married men for the firebrand obtained from the *khoro* to re-light their fires, by the men to the boys for their services in the rite, and by the boys to the official keeper of the *mufugo* at the capital. Two distinctive patterns are explicit in this rite: fire in its aspect of a valuable commodity and as almost the prerogative of the chief, to whom his subjects must pay a royal 'fire tax'; and fire in its aspect of giving out deleterious 'heat', which must be counteracted by 'cooling' with *mufugo* (*hu fuga*, to blow upon by a cool breeze, to sprinkle with 'cooling' medicine).

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Fire also belongs to a third pattern which links it up with crises or great changes, ritualizes its value, and uses it to extinguish an evil or to purify a state of defilement. In their present cultural connotation among the Lovedu, these three patterns are implicit in the nature of fire, but they do not always merge in ritual situations, and, as far as the evidence of the cultures of the Northern Transvaal go, they belong to different cultural configurations. This evidence seems to indicate that the 'royal tax', through which authority is asserted and acknowledged, came from the Karanga, that the association with purification and 'transitions' was borrowed from the old Sotho, and that the conception of 'heat' as the antithesis of health of body and well-being of the country, was contributed by a wider and less easily determinable culture substratum. The

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significance of the fire rite at the accession of a queen can be understood only in the context of the three patterns as they have been integrated into Lovedu culture and become merged in the rite.

Firstly, fire figures in the borrowed 'transition' rites, but not in the girls' puberty rite (*khɔba*). Midway in the sacred fire of the boys' circumcision (*vudiga*) is its central shrine at the place where the chief initiate (*washe*) sits. In the sanctum of the Bird of the *vyali* there is an undying fire. The end of these 'schools' is spoken of as 'a burning down' (*hu swa*): the fire destroys all the distinctive things of the 'school', the lodge, the tables, the tiniest bits of grass that fell from the dancing performers, and, as the lodge burns, the initiates, turning their backs upon it, may not look round and are irrevocably severed from their past. Again, when 'the country is not right' and has to be re-established or purified of its pollution with 'cooling' medicine (*mufugo*), a transition is implied, for it is said, 'The fires are put out to usher in a new year'. The same conception reappears when *mufugo* is used before the accession of a new queen.

Secondly, the firebrand, as the symbol of authority, figures in the warrant (*khiso*, i.e. firebrand) given by the queen which authorizes district heads to hold 'schools'. This warrant of authority is most strikingly evident in the firebrand and calabash handed to a disaffected noble or would-be usurper as an intimation that he is expelled from the country. It has merged with the *mufugo* rite enacted to render the earth receptive to the power of rain magic or to herald the accession of a queen; and here it takes the form of a 'royal tax' vicariously exacted through the women, their husbands, the boys sprinkling the medicine, and the keeper of the *mufugo* at the capital.

Thirdly, 'beating out' of fires with 'cooling' medicine belongs to a complex of rites for counteracting the harmful effects of 'heat', a conception explained in Chapter XII. 'Heat' not only arises from the contamination of death, but is the concomitant of disease, weakens the charms (*dithugula*), impedes rain, and defiles the earth. In all these cases it is combated with 'cooling' medicine, as we describe elsewhere. In addition, the *gɔma* drums are prevented from losing their concentrated power by the 'cool' river stones in them, witches are thwarted by protective charms (*diphaba*) in which the products of the sea are the most powerful elements, and the 'heat' of the ancestors' anger is 'cooled' with *mufugo*. The death of a queen 'dries up' or 'heats' the whole country, which has to be cooled as a preparation for the new ruler.

Thus in the fire rite at a queen's accession, the culture is handling complicated and all-important conceptions. The pervasive evil corrupting the country must be neutralized; the relationship of ruler and ruled, superior and inferior, must be visibly reasserted; and there must be enacted a momentous new start marking the inception of a new destiny and preparing the universe for the reception of the next rain-maker. The fire rite on this occasion symbolizes a mighty purification and 'transition', epitomizes the allegiance of subjects and the authority of the queen, and inaugurates a cosmic order in which the magic of a new rain-maker may be auspiciously manifested. That, in the Lovedu cultural context, is the meaning of the fire rite.

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634 425 423 for land would then be regarded more favourably should he one day return. The fruits of the soil are dealt with in much the same manner. A man may graze his cattle inside or outside the district, but the cattle posts of the old days were within the district only. We have mentioned the rivalries of herdboys of different districts; we may add that some district heads, because of traditional values and limited grazing land, object to fencing. District heads sometimes reserve valuable trees for themselves, and it is they who give permission for the cutting down of large and shady trees or indigenous fruit-trees (though they be on the landowner's land). Honey found in trees, but not that found in the ground allotted, belongs to the district head. Some heads allow only residents to cut grass, making others pay. Hunting and water rights are not so regulated, but digging of clay is sometimes, if illegally. The [778] preservation of large forests, a national asset, as places of the gods or of refuge in time of war is the concern of the queen, so that, for instance, Mujaji II had her cattle driven into the gardens of some people, including a district head, who had cleared part of the Levyeni forest and had not begged pardon by sending a *mujanoni* to her.

634 643 651 Some distinctive cultural and administrative arrangements of the districts have already been mentioned. There are many others. All district heads used to have, and many still have, certain fields cultivated for them. The queen also has such fields in her districts, and since 1927 each district head has had to cultivate a field (*muremo*) in his district for the queen, an innovation suggested by the European to enable the queen to help her people during famines. The experiment has turned out very differently. These fields are badly cultivated, for years some district heads bring no mealies, the failure only sporadically leading to the penalization of the head and his district, and the mealies are always converted into beer for entertainments at the capital that benefit only the local residents. The storage of mealies is impracticable and a system of distribution is not implied in cultural arrangements. A district head unwillingly surrenders land and sometimes expropriates first one then another landowner, so that there is much dissatisfaction and even refusal to cultivate the *muremo*.

634 651 In many respects district heads are like chiefs. They are often called 'chief' (*khosi*) and, like the queen, have medicines to safeguard them in their position of authority. A district head is not only the most important person in the district, the centre of its political and legal life, the man who is responsible for the welfare of his people, but the obligations of district residents towards him emphasize both his position and the reciprocities between ruler and subject. It is expected that his subjects shall bring him beer periodically, and sometimes it is held that he should be invited to every beer party held in his area, partly because he is responsible for order at the beer drink and partly because it is his due. All his subjects must make *marula* cider for him in the proper season, and similarly, when at certain ceremonies, held by him for the well-being of the district, beer is required, every resident must contribute. The most important occasion is at the harvest thanksgiving and the beer brought is regarded as being in return for the land given by the head to his people. On the pattern of

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services to a chief, residents must also build his village and mend his huts. These privileges and obligations are not merely theoretical; they are very much in evidence and can be observed to-day in the districts as much as, if not more than, at the capital. The first edible termites found in the district must, in the case of some of the more important heads, be brought to the district head; these ants are ritually associated with rain-making and are put into the rain pots which these heads have.

The national 'schools' are sometimes held independently by district heads; in 'biting' the first fruits (*ku lama*) and in turning the first soil, the precedence of the queen is hardly recognised. The head at Dzja and the senior male line of the royal family have theoretical precedence in *ku lama* and, in contrast to many neighbouring tribes, there is little stress upon having the queen's field hoed first; in practice to-day her field is never ploughed first. Maunadala, it is said, in the old days paid an ox to anticipate the queen's hoeing and thus avoided threatening starvation; but dispensations of this nature, while recognizing a theoretical rule, throw into relief the much greater autonomy of the district here than elsewhere. The district head is solely responsible for *ku upa*, the rite that drives away destructive birds and monkeys when crops are ripe; to him the death of every resident is reported (the report being transmitted to the queen only when a relative of hers dies) and the resulting 'holiday' is held only in the district. Each district head has his own drums through which he controls dancing (*gwba*), religious observances, and some of the 'schools'. The girls' puberty rite (*khobo*) is entirely district-controlled.

The individuality of some districts is seen in esoteric customs; elsewhere by taboo, succession ceremonial, and a distinctive community life. At Khiobeni people may construct on the edge of the village a rain-shelter (*kwado*) in which fire is made; in neighbouring areas this is taboo. Work on the day following the new moon is said to have been taboo in the old days at Matsui, though the rule is never observed to-day; in neighbouring areas there never was such a holiday. The Thovola in one district have a special dance with a special ritual. As regards succession, the queen usually merely confirms, though she maintains touch through an elaborate ceremony: she is notified of the death of the head, sends the 'mother' of the district to take part in the ceremony of installation and, in the case of heads of the royal group, the *swidzjani* appear. The ceremonial, however, more intimately concerns the district: there is a local 'holiday' after the death, the *gwba* dance is taboo for a year, girls undergo puberty initiation elsewhere, beer is made by the district to 'open the drums', and each head of a family sends a goat or ox., 'the eye of the chief', to acknowledge their new head. The life of the district is often distinctive. Matsui is said to be wasteful and, according to one of their praises, people there, instead of stamping, for which they are too lazy, 'burn their finger-nails roasting green mealies'. Everything is rather slack and happy-go-lucky, beer drinks are apt to be unruly, the district head is at loggerheads with his uncles, and his subjects talk disparagingly of 'this district-head business of going about and drinking beer'. Bacchanalian orgies after the harvest, slack morals, and other irregularities at Matsui contrast strikingly with conditions at Bagoni, an adjacent district. At Bagoni there is a tradition